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COUNTRY PROGRAMME STRATEGY NOTE**

Malaysia

SUMMARY

The Executive Director presents the country programme strategy note for Malaysia for a programme of cooperation for the period 1997 to 2000.

Malaysia has maintained a high economic growth rate, averaging 8 per cent per year, and its social indicators for children and women indicate a strong performance. Malaysia has achieved all the mid-decade goals except those for iodine deficiency and mild malnutrition in certain areas. Acute respiratory infections remain a major cause of infant and child deaths. The extended family has largely become the nuclear family, with new patterns of child care, accompanied by such new problems as increased reporting of child abuse cases, juvenile delinquency and occasional substance abuse.

The proposed country programme will aim to support achievement of the goals for the year 2000, to facilitate the implementation and monitoring of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and to explore opportunities and mechanisms for Malaysia's contribution to the global development effort for children. The two main strategies are local capacity-building and advocacy and social mobilization. The former will focus on local capacity-building, particularly promoting family and community participation. Advocacy and social mobilization will include studies and exchanges of experiences focusing on children's concerns and partnership-building. The programme will contribute to the evolving UNICEF strategy on potential roles of newly industrializing countries for improving the well-being of children.

* E/ICEF/1996/2.

** An addendum to the present report containing the final country programme recommendation will be submitted to the Executive Board for approval at its third regular session of 1996.

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THE SITUATION OF CHILDREN AND WOMEN

1. As part of the East and South-eastern Asian economic miracle, Malaysia has consistently maintained a high rate of economic growth, averaging over 8 per cent per year. There has been strong public investment in energy, communications, transportation, human resources and social development projects. With a commitment to macroeconomic stability, Malaysia has maintained stable price levels, a relatively low inflation rate, a high rate of employment and has experienced a rising labour shortage. Per capita income is estimated at $3,200 per year, and the proportion of the population below the poverty line was reduced from 60 per cent in 1960 to less than 13.5 per cent in 1993.

2. Malaysia's achievements can be attributed to strong leadership and political will, focused on a balanced approach to economic growth and social development with a deliberate plan to reduce poverty. Malaysia has a well trained and educated civil service, committed at all levels to implementing and monitoring goal-oriented programmes. In addition, there is a well developed physical and institutional infrastructure, a strong private sector, motivated non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and academic communities, all of which contribute to economic and social development and to a caring society.

3. In 1992, the Cabinet approved a detailed National Plan of Action (NPA) for the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s within the framework of Malaysia's Second Outline Perspective Plan (1991-2000). In February 1995, in a further reaffirmation of its commitment to children, Malaysia ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

4. Malaysia has achieved and sustained most of the mid-decade goals, with the exception of those for iodine deficiency disorders (IDD) and malnutrition, which is prevalent in mild forms in a few population pockets. The country can achieve most of the goals of the World Summit for Children. Acute respiratory infections (ARI) remain a principal cause of infant and child deaths. By 1993, the proportion of the population with access to safe water and sanitary facilities had increased to 90 and 95 per cent, respectively.

5. In recent decades, Malaysia has made major investments in education and human resource development. Social indicators of the situation of children and women have reflected an equally strong performance. The infant mortality rate (IMR) was reduced from 73 per 1 000 live births in 1960 to 13 by 1993, and the under-five mortality rate (U5MR) declined from 105 to 17 per 1 000 live births during the same period. Adult literacy rates for men and women increased from 71 and 48 per cent in 1970 to 91 and 83 per cent, respectively, in 1993. The gender gap in gross primary school enrolment rates, reflected by 108 per cent enrolment for boys and 73 per cent for girls in 1960, disappeared with 99 per cent enrolment for both by 1992. The proportion of children reaching fifth grade is 98 per cent, with over 50 per cent of pre-school-aged children attending pre-primary school.

6. In the last few decades, there has been migration from rural to urban areas, and the extended family has tended to become the nuclear family. Concurrently, an increasing number of women have joined the labour force, resulting, in some cases, in shortage of parental time for child-rearing and care of young children. These emerging child-rearing issues are requiring joint

action by parents, schools and communities. There also has been increased reporting of child abuse cases, juvenile delinquency and occasional substance abuse.

7. In October 1995, the Ministry of National Unity and Social Development convened a "National Consultative Forum on Caring for Children of Malaysia - 2020". This forum provided an opportunity to exchange views and perspectives among representatives of concerned ministries, NGOs, the private sector, the academic community, the media and UNICEF on problems and priorities for children in Malaysia over the next 25 years. This exchange was a contribution to national planning for children, in the perspective of what Malaysia calls "Vision 2020", a time-frame for and set of goals and challenges by which the country is to measure its emergence as a fully matured industrialized economy and equitable, caring society.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM PAST COOPERATION

8. Given Malaysia's achievements and level of development, the contribution of UNICEF, in financial terms, has been modest. The programme of cooperation has focused on advocacy for the goals for the year 2000, the NPA and ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This demonstrated the need to adapt global goals to the framework of the Malaysian Constitution and culture. The Government's service delivery system has the capacity and has responded positively to the challenges of the World Summit goals for children. These goal-oriented programmes have focused on universal coverage, with particular attention to disadvantaged groups. The cooperation has supported studies of early childhood development and child abuse and a survey of IDD prevalence. UNICEF has supported training of child protection workers in dealing with child abuse and neglect, training of traditional birth attendants (TBAs) in Sabah and Sarawak, and two innovative approaches to lowering maternal mortality. These programmes demonstrated the Government's willingness to respond to the need for disparity reduction in the areas of child survival and development, and to address emerging protection issues.

9. The programme of cooperation has provided a new opportunity to place the Malaysian child and family at the centre of national efforts in the context of Vision 2020 by broadening the support networks of communities, NGOs, the private sector, the media and the academic community. This institutional networking in Malaysia is part of its development strategy and could further facilitate the implementation and monitoring of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

10. As part of the evolving UNICEF partnership with middle-income countries, the programme of cooperation has recognized Malaysia's potential for contributing in creative ways to the survival, development and protection of children in other developing countries in Asia and other parts of the world.

PROPOSED COUNTRY PROGRAMME STRATEGY

11. The programme of cooperation for the period 1997-2000 will have three general objectives: (a) to support achievement of the goals for the year 2000; (b) to facilitate implementation and monitoring of the Convention on the Rights

of the Child; and (c) to explore opportunities and mechanisms for Malaysia's contribution to development efforts for children in other developing countries in Asia and other parts of the world.

12. The specific objectives of the programme are: (a) to support ARI prevention and health care for newborns as part of the strategy for reducing IMR and U5MR; (b) to continue to support the safe motherhood programme as part of reducing maternal mortality; (c) to support programmes to reduce micronutrient deficiency as part of reducing malnutrition; (d) to improve the quality of early child care and pre-school education; (e) to support community initiatives in early detection and prevention of child abuse and neglect and to strengthen parenting skills and knowledge of child care practices; (f) to encourage initiatives in supporting child and youth participation in activities and responsibility to the family, school and community; and (g) to support government efforts in networking with Malaysian organizations concerned with children's issues and to explore possible government efforts to establish and strengthen links with similar organizations in other Asian countries and elsewhere in the world.

13. The country programme strategy will include capacity-building, which will take into account the strength of the existing system of service delivery. A focus will be on local capacity-building, particularly promoting family and community participation. Examples include community case detection and management of ARI, training of TBAs and health workers for safe delivery and increasing mothers' awareness of prenatal care, particularly prevention of neonatal tetanus. A related focus will be on improving parenting skills and child care practices, early detection by parents, families and communities of child abuse cases, and community monitoring of the situation of children. Another dimension of capacity-building will support institutional linkages and coordination of various government departments and ministries in such areas as collection and analysis of data on children, and also assist coordination among various government and private sector agencies involved in day-care and pre-school education programmes, as well as training programmes for pre-school teachers and day-care workers.

14. Advocacy and social mobilization strategies will include support to studies on child development, protection, participation and responsibility, and critical analysis of successful initiatives and programmes in these areas in order to strengthen advocacy and raise awareness. This dimension will include exchanges of ideas, experiences and initiatives focusing on children's concerns and involving government agencies, religious leadership, the academic community, NGOs, training and research institutions, the media and the private sector to enhance their contribution to children. A new element will explore strategies and mechanisms for Malaysia's participation with newly industrializing and other countries in Asia in experience exchange, technical assistance, training, policy analysis and inter-country research on children's issues. This will be a major component of the proposed country programme in Malaysia and thus will contribute to the evolving UNICEF strategy for encouraging and increasing the role and contribution of newly industrializing countries in Asia and other regions of the world to improve the well-being of children. Dialogue with government partner agencies is expected to continue during the country programme planning process and is likely to continue during the programming period.

ESTIMATED PROGRAMME BUDGET

15. The estimated programme budget for general resources will be based on a continuing dialogue with the Government of Malaysia over the next few months. Possibilities and mechanisms for supplementary funding will be explored as part of the planning process.

Estimated programme cooperation, 1997-2000 a/
(In thousands of United States dollars)

General resources	Supplementary funds	Total
3 000	b/	3 000

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a/ These are indicative figures only which are subject to change once aggregate financial data are finalized.

b/ The amount of supplementary funding will be decided at a later stage after further discussion.